



The Michigan National Career Readiness Certificate (MI NCRC) Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Michigan National Career Readiness Certificate (MI NCRC)?

This portable credential — powered by WorkKeys® — verifies to employers anywhere in Michigan and the United States that an individual has essential core employability skills in Applied Mathematics, Locating Information and Reading for Information. These three skills are highly important to the majority of jobs in the workplace. The certificate offers individuals, employers, and educators an easily understood and universally valued credential that certifies the attainment of these workplace skills.

Who developed WorkKeys® and the National Career Readiness Certificate?

WorkKeys® and the National Career Readiness Certificate were developed by ACT, an internationally recognized assessment and research company. ACT is best known for the ACT assessment, which helps students transition into college. ACT is equally committed to helping individuals transition into and within the workplace using WorkKeys®.

How did the National Career Readiness Certificate become the MI NCRC?

There is already broad-based usage of WorkKeys® and the NCRC throughout the State of Michigan. All three of the WorkKeys® tests that make up the NCRC are included in the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) given to all high school juniors. WorkKeys® tests are currently in use by many of the Michigan Works! Agencies to determine candidates' skills and qualifications for available jobs. They are also being used by state apprenticeship training and other occupational programs to determine applicants' readiness to enter and succeed in the program, and many of the state's community colleges are WorkKeys® testing centers.

The Council for Labor & Economic Growth (CLEG), Michigan's state workforce investment board, recommended that the State of Michigan adopt a national career readiness certificate ("MI NCRC" based on ACT WorkKeys®) be implemented statewide.

Why is the MI NCRC based on the Applied Mathematics, Locating Information and Reading for Information, skills?

ACT has profiled more than 14,000 individual jobs across the country to determine the skills and skill levels needed to succeed in them. ACT currently has nine different assessments. However, according to ACT findings, three skills are highly important to the vast majority of jobs.

- **Applied Mathematics**—Applying mathematical reasoning to work-related problems.
- **Locating Information**—Using information from materials like diagrams, floor plans, tables, forms, graphs, and charts. A solid foundation of these three skills is essential for a well-qualified workforce.
- **Reading for Information**—Comprehending work-related reading materials, from memos and bulletins to policy manuals and governmental regulations.

What makes the MI NCRC unique?

The MI NCRC is based on a subset of the well-established WorkKeys® tests that are documented as making a difference for employers. WorkKeys® has been in use for nearly two decades and is already widely accepted by thousands of companies all over the world. Also, WorkKeys exams are compliant with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations. Because WorkKeys® assesses essential foundational skills, they are applicable to, and necessary for, virtually every job.

While the NCRC is in place in several other states, Michigan is the first state to use the NCRC statewide in both its education and workforce systems. Additionally, in response to employer requests to further prepare Michigan job seekers for employment, individuals who complete employability skills training that comply with state standards will receive a completion of training certificate from their Michigan Works! Agency.

What are employability skills?

Employability skills represent essential work habits, behaviors, and attitudes required in today's workplace. They include skill development in areas such as effective communication, teamwork, diversity, conflict resolution, problem solving, and critical thinking.

What are the certificate skill levels?

The WorkKeys® job profiling process has generated a database with occupational profiles for thousands of jobs across the country. A majority of the jobs in the database require certain skill levels in three core areas: Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information. The higher the skill levels, the more jobs for which the applicant qualifies. The certificates are given in four categories:

- **Platinum Level**—Signifies an individual has scored at least a Level 6 in each of the three core areas.
- **Gold Level**—Signifies an individual has scored at a Level 5 in each of the three core areas.
- **Silver Level**—Signifies an individual has scored at least a Level 4 in each of the three core areas.
- **Bronze Level**—Signifies an individual has scored at least a Level 3 in each of the three core areas.

How are the certificate skill levels related to job skill requirements?

The WorkKeys® assessments contain situations, reading materials, problems, and messages directly related to activities in the workplace. The assessments are criteria-referenced to skills and skill levels that employers have determined are necessary for successful performance in the workplace.

How can employers use the MI NCRC?

Employers use the MI NCRC as one factor, along with other educational and background information, in making employment and training decisions. The MI NCRC is often considered a plus when presented to an employer during the hiring process because it shows the individual has attained specific workforce competency levels in Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information.

What are the benefits to an employer using the MI NCRC?

WorkKeys® assessments have been shown to improve the quality of new hires, reduce training time, reduce turnover, and increase productivity. An employer may use the MI NCRC to help reduce hiring time and costs.

How will employers know applicants have valid MI NCRCs?

Certification is verifiable in two ways. The applicant/employee may present the physical certificate. Employers can also verify certification through the ACT website (www.act.org/certificate/verify) using the certificate number provided by the applicant/employee.

Why do individuals need the MI NCRC?

The MI NCRC is designed to complement other traditional credentials, such as a high school diploma, community college degree, or college degree. While these educational credentials mark the fulfillment of an individual's classroom learning experiences, the certificate confirms the individual's competence in a specific set of workplace skills.

Do individuals with a high school diploma or GED still need a MI NCRC?

Yes. The MI NCRC shows an individual's qualifications in essential workplace skills. But it is not a replacement for the high school diploma or any other credential or certification. It is a reinforcement of the new Michigan high school standards and a portal to tutorial learning, remediation, postsecondary education, and work. The certificate is a meaningful achievement along the continuum of lifelong learning.

Is training available to improve the WorkKeys® skill levels?

WorkKeys® is tied to specific training and curriculum for skill improvement, enabling educators and trainers to help individuals improve their skills and enhance job opportunities.

Where do individuals go to enroll and take the assessments for the MI NCRC?

Individuals should contact their local Michigan Works! Agency for more information by calling 1-800-285-WORKS (9675).

How much do the assessments cost and how will the costs be covered?

Each assessment costs \$5 and the certificate itself is an additional \$5. Federal funds available through the state of Michigan will be used to cover these costs for individuals assessed through the Michigan Works! system.

Is the MI NCRC a racially/ethnically neutral assessment?

WorkKeys® provides all individuals, independent of their racial/ethnic background, a fair opportunity to demonstrate their skills. To ensure this opportunity, the WorkKeys® assessments are developed according to high professional standards. Assessment items are subjected to an external review for cultural bias and are analyzed to ensure they provide a fair test of the skills being assessed. The important consideration is that individuals have access to a valid and reliable indicator of their skills so their strengths and weaknesses can be accurately identified and addressed.

Are accommodations made for those interested in pursuing a certificate who have disabilities?

It is essential that obtaining the MI NCRC be an inclusive process for customers with disabilities. MWAs must follow the WorkKeys® guidelines for providing accommodations for customers with disabilities. Employers must be informed that regardless of how customers with disabilities score on WorkKeys®, employers still have a responsibility to consider employment for that applicant if they can perform the essential functions of the job they are applying for with reasonable accommodation.

The Michigan Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth is an equal opportunity employer/program.

